



**Virginia Department of Health
Remote Area Medical Clinic
Media Tour
July 2006**

Public Health Issues in Southwest Virginia

Accessible Health Care

- Access to health care is a critical need. Physical distance, economic and social factors all act as barriers to care. The Virginia Department of Health, in conjunction with its public and private sector partners, is addressing these barriers in a number of ways.
- Regional Area Medical and Dental Clinics, where area residents can receive onsite care valued at no cost.
- Telehealth: VDH is a member of the Virginia Telehealth Network, a collaboration between public and private partners to improve access to care. Using state-of-the-art technology such as video conferencing, health care providers offer remote consultations and diagnostic services to Virginians in rural areas and those who cannot otherwise be seen in a normal clinical setting.
- Along with Medicaid, Virginia's local health departments provide a safety net for individuals who otherwise may not receive health care.
 - Local health departments offer services including immunizations, dental health, well child clinics, women's health, health screenings, wellness programs, in-home services, STD testing and treatment, and environmental protection services.
- VDH assists underserved areas of Virginia in obtaining designations that make them eligible for federal assistance in meeting local primary health care needs.
 - Geographic areas may receive a designation as a health professional shortage area or a medically underserved area. These designations make them eligible for assistance including scholarship and loan repayment programs, the Rural Health Clinic Act, Medicare Incentive Payments for Physician's services, and Area Health Education Center Program.

Healthy Lifestyles

- Chronic diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes are leading causes of death and disability in Virginia. These diseases threaten the quality of life and life expectancy of many Virginians and are a key factor underlying increases in health care costs. Poor diet, physical inactivity, obesity and tobacco use represent preventable risk factors for the development of many chronic diseases. These diseases are very expensive to treat, making prevention and control all the more important, particularly at a time when so many Virginians continue to experience difficulties with access to care.
- The State Board of Health has made chronic disease prevention and control its top priority. Local programs in southwest Virginia support the Board's goal.
 - The Lenowisco Health District Diabetes Control Program is working to decrease the number of diabetes related hospitalizations and deaths by increasing the awareness and education of diabetes and related issues and promoting healthy management of diabetes.
 - VDH's Cardiovascular Health Program funds local projects to provide community-based prevention/intervention projects focused on the reduction of cardiovascular disease. These projects focus on promoting primary and secondary prevention and control of heart attacks and strokes.

Environmental Factors

Access to clean, reliable drinking water is vital to public health. To improve accessibility to reliable and safe drinking water, VDH administers and distributes state and federal funds awarded through a combination of loans and grants provided by the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) program. The VDH Office of Drinking Water (ODW) manages the funding for these projects, and coordinates with other organizations to help communities expand and upgrade their water systems.